

Attention: House Appropriations Committee – School Aid
Representatives: Kelly, Potvin, Poleski, Pagel, Sarah Roberts, Zemke
RE: Section 107 State School Aide Act for 2016-2017

I am speaking today in support of the proposed changes in the Governor's Executive Recommendations on Section 107 of the State School Aid Act for 2016-17. There is a significant historical basis for planned revisions. The origin of these changes has a rich history that began in 2008. Three separate work groups have documented the imperative need for transformation and carefully weighed the impact of the proposed changes to adult education.

The **Adult Learning Work Group** was commissioned in 2008 by the Low-Wage Worker Advancement Strategy Committee of Governor Granholm's Council for Labor and Economic Growth. Membership included adult learning practitioners from around the state, representing community colleges, literacy councils, adult basic education programs, Michigan Works! Agencies, MACAE, community-based organizations and four state departments. Its aim was to recommend comprehensive policy reforms which would substantially re-design the adult learning infrastructure in Michigan. In order to obtain maximum information and support, fourteen state-wide forums were held. Results from this undertaking were published in the report "Transforming Michigan's Adult Learning Infrastructure."

The Executive summary of this report revealed some sobering statistics:

- One out of three working-age Michigan adults — 1.7 million people — lack the basic skills or credentials to attain family-sustaining jobs and contribute to the state's economy.
- Of these adults, 692,000 do not have a GED or high-school diploma.
- 44 percent of Michigan's adults have very minimal literacy skills, no greater than those necessary to perform simple and everyday activities.
- Nearly 1.15 million working adults in Michigan who have earned a GED or high-school diploma, but have not entered post-secondary education, are earning at or below the State's median wage of \$15.45 per hour.
- According to community colleges around the state, at least 60 percent of students entering these institutions require remediation prior to engaging in post-secondary education. Basic skills development is a major barrier for many who are seeking post-secondary credentials.

The report defined the urgent need for transformation to build a strong workforce and "improve the state's global competitiveness, employers' prosperity and worker's ability to succeed in the new economy."

The second group to address this issue was the **Adult Education Transformation Taskforce** formed in response to the 2009-2010 Section 107 legislation that directed DELEG Department of Lifelong Learning to create an Adult Learning Planning Group. This group was made of twenty-one individuals representing a balance of rural, urban and suburban community and adult education directors from around the state. They were charged with operationalizing the suggestions of the Adult Learning Workgroup by recommending a comprehensive adult education delivery system that ensures that all areas of the state are adequately served while fostering partnerships for creating seamless transitions between adult education, post-secondary education

and employment.

Changes enacted in the 2014-2015 Section 107 State Aid Act as well as those proposed in current legislation stem from the recommendations of this Adult Education Transformation Taskforce. Detailed information can be found in the report "Michigan's Adult Education System – A Framework for Transformation."

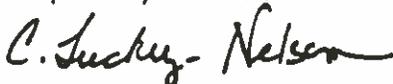
The last group that has addressed the transformation of Michigan's Adult Education structure is the current **Section 107 Transition Workgroup**. This assembly comprised of ISD – Fiscal Agents, Adult Education Providers, Michigan Works! representatives and MACAE leaders began in 2014 and was charged with implementing the changes made in the 2014-2015 Section 107 State Aid Act. Programming into a regional distribution of funds to help insure better access to adult education services was developed by identifying the criteria for provider selection. This year's group topics included the proposed changes in current legislation. The subject generated great discussion with concerns being voiced. In the end, the group collectively agreed to proceed.

I have been the Adult Education Coordinator for Northwest Michigan Works! for over 15 years and have also had the great honor of sitting on each of the workgroups noted above. Our adult education program has been a collaborative effort between Michigan Works! and local adult education programs for 18 years, and it is because of this collaborative approach that services are able to be provided to any adult who needs remedial education in Northwest Michigan. We operate 9 sites, 5 of which are housed inside Michigan Works! Service centers and are open year round so that students can register at any time. Our services are seamless with access for any individual, regardless of whether they have a high school diploma or not. This seamless access was beneficial when the recession hit and many dislocated workers who had already earned high school diplomas were out of work and needed remediation in order to train for new jobs or enter postsecondary education or training. In addition, collaborations with our local community colleges help provide remediation to individuals for postsecondary education in an effort to eliminate the burdensome costs of developmental education. Traditional adult education funding only offers services to those without a high school diploma. Current legislation would change this.

Finally, the current adult education structure is based on counting students with the K-12 seat time. The expectation for adults to be in seats on "count days" is unrealistic for adults with jobs and families. This structure makes it difficult to generate funding and encourages a traditional semester based programming which does not meet the needs of the working adults with families to support.

In conclusion, I urge you to continue to fund adult education and accept the proposed changes to Section 107 funding. Through strong collaboration and partnerships, I can truly attest to the great gains we can make to build a strong workforce.

Respectfully Submitted:



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Education Coordinator
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